



Head Start

CHILD DEVELOPMENT POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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INTRODUCTION

Head Start was first authorized under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to provide comprehensive developmental services to disadvantaged preschool children, ages three to five. Operating as a nine-month, part-day program for low-income young children and their families, more than 12 million children have received Head Start's comprehensive services since its inception in 1965. In **California, more than 700,000 low-income preschool children have participated in Head Start.**

Head Start grantees range in size from programs serving as few as 25 children to very large organizations, serving as many as 17,500 children. In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 1995, California administered its Head Start programs through 57 local grantee agencies, 81 delegate agencies, and 10 Early Head Start grantees. For FFY 1996, California Head Start grantees received over \$400 million to serve 71,025 children.

MISSION

"To bring about a greater degree of social competence in children of low-income families."

Head Start works to develop linkages with other local community social service delivery systems. The program also attempts to make a positive impact for children and families in these areas:

- Offering high quality child care and development services for low-income families;
- Expanding state and local activities for children;
- Expanding the range and quality of services for young children and their families;
- Offering training opportunities for program staff;
- Improving cognitive abilities of young children; and
- Reducing the need for public school special education later in a child's life.

SERVICES

Head Start attempts to link low-income families and their children with needed services through a family-focused approach. Individualized plans are developed for each child and family to link families to needed services, which may include:

Health Services: Head Start emphasizes early identification of health problems and links children into a comprehensive health care program that may include immunizations, medical and dental care, mental health services, and nutrition.

Social Services: The program strives to assess family needs and provide services that build upon the individual strengths of families to meet their own needs through referrals, family needs

assessments, and linkage to community resources, emergency assistance, and crisis intervention.

Education: Head Start's educational program is structured to meet each child's individual needs and to stimulate intellectual, social, and emotional growth. Programs are culturally sensitive.

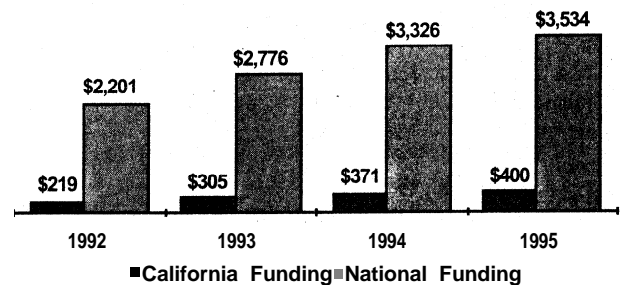
Parental Involvement: Opportunities exist for involvement in parent education, program planning, decision-making, and participation in other operational activities.

FUNDING

Unlike most other federal assistance programs for low-income families that are channeled through state governments, Head Start is one of the few publicly funded programs representing a direct partnership between the federal government and local community agencies. Grants are awarded directly to the local community and are monitored by federal staff. By law federal grants provide 80 percent of the funding needed. The other 20 percent must be raised through local community participation and donated services which may include:

- Volunteer hours,
- Reduced space costs,
- Equipment/supply donations; and
- Donations from public and private sources.

Head Start Funding in Millions (Federal Fiscal Year)



ENROLLMENT

The Head Start Expansion and Improvement Act of 1990 authorized funding to serve all eligible children by 1994, and also contained provisions to strengthen program quality. Appropriations have increased since the Act, and as a result, the Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) reported in its January 1992 Head Start Fact Sheet that enrollment nationwide increased by 42,541 children in 1991 to a total of 621,078 children. Project Head Start experiences continued growth for the FFY 1996 as the program receives \$3.57 billion, representing a \$36 million increase over 1995.

LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT

ADMINISTRATION

At the national level, Head Start is administered by the Administration on Children and Families (ACF) of the USDHHS. There are ten ACF Regional Offices that administer Head Start grants. The California Head Start Program is administered within Region IX.

Flexibility is given to local grantees in developing programs and options, as long as the basic goals, objectives, and standards of a comprehensive program are encompassed 'and in compliance with Head Start performance standards' Some grantee program options include: standard program design, double sessions, full-day year-round services, parent/child centers, and home-based programs.

Management responsibilities are shared among several individuals comprising local management teams. Each Head Start program is also required to have a Policy Council that reviews, monitors, and approves all head Start programs. The council's membership must consist of at least 50 percent of parents of currently enrolled Head Start children.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for Head Start, a child must be below the age of compulsory school attendance and from a family whose income is below the federal poverty line (\$13,950 per year for a family of four) or eligible for public assistance. There is no requirement for either parent to be working, in a training program, or currently seeking employment. By regulation, local Head Start programs also may enroll up to 10 percent "over income" children. In addition, Head Start regulations require that at least ten percent of enrollment opportunities in each program are made available to children with disabilities.

EARLY HEAD START

The Head Start Reauthorization Act of 1994 authorized the creation of an new program for infants and toddlers, modeled as an expanded version of the Head Start program. The Early Head Start Program (EHS) bases its efforts on research findings that the years from conception to age three are critical in child development, and that effective, quality child development, services can make a difference in enhancing the growth of young children.

EHS offers expanded services that seek to address the health needs of newborns and encourage better interaction between parents and infants and toddlers. EHS also targets families with unique needs such as parental substance abuse and parenting teens. USDHHS has authorized grants for a total of 142 EHS programs, ten of which are in California. EHS will receive 4% of Head Start's total budget in FFY 1996 and 5% in FFY 1997.

COLLABORATION WITH STATE PROGRAMS

The California Department of Education was recently awarded a grant from the USDHHS to implement a collaborative project with the Head Start program, known as the California 'Head Start State Collaboration Project. The mission of the project is to facilitate involvement of Head Start in state level activities

and policies in order to improve services to low-income children and families. The project also seeks to promote collaboration between Head Start and other children's programs for the purpose of strengthening; leading, and assisting child development programs.

Another vehicle for collaboration is the California Head Start Association, which can be used as a point of contact for state programs and agencies wishing to work with Head Start.

Head Start funds have fallen short of reaching the goal of serving all eligible children by 1994. Today, about one of every three children eligible for Head Start are enrolled.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Head Start performance standards encourage grantees to provide the services necessary to meet project goals. These standards were revised in November, 1996, to incorporate new standards for infants and toddlers, recent research, and the need for collaboration. The standards become effective January 1, 1998.

The new program standards govern services for children beyond the preschool years, from birth to five years, and their families. The standards have also been organized to support interdisciplinary collaboration and to facilitate staff training and program management.

CALIFORNIA'S HEAD START CHILDREN IN 1995				
	Age		Racial/Ethnic Composition	
Under 3	1,604	1.8%	Native American	1.2%
3 years	20,864	23.4%	Hispanic	58.3%
4 years	62,681	70.3%	Black	16.2%
5 years	4,012	4.5%	White	17.2%
Total	89,161		Asian	7.1%

ISSUES

Welfare Reform: Most of the families served by Head Start receive or qualify to receive public assistance. However, Head Start is generally a part day, nine month program, which has been a limiting factor in allowing parents to work full-time. Recent federal welfare reform will place greater pressure upon the states to move families from welfare to work. Opportunities should be explored to utilize Head Start to allow families to work full time while supporting children's growth and preparing them to enter school.

Building Linkages: In California, some positive steps have occurred to link Head Start with state programs such as State Preschool. In some cases, Head Start and State Preschool are co-located, and children may attend a "full-day" program. However, this is not the case throughout the state. Additional steps should be identified to link children of poor and working poor families, as well as abused, neglected and at risk children, with Head Start programs.

Adapted by Cecily Fraser & Jeffery Hanna, January, 1997.

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